DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 330 275 HE 024 363

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TITLE Suggestions for Assessment of the Campus Racial/Ethnic Climate: A Coordinated Campus Self-Study.
PUB DATE 90
NOTE 11p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (98th Boston, MA, August 10-14, 1990).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Environment; Cultural Differences; *Educational Environment; Ethnic Groups; Higher Education; Leadership; Minority Groups; *Multicultural Education; *Research Design; Research Methodology; *Self Evaluation (Groups)
IDENTIFIERS Diversity (Student); University of Illinois Urbana Champaign

ABSTRACT

This paper is a proposal to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign on ways to evaluate its environment for multicultural living and education. The paper begins by discussing the nature and definition of a multicultural society in higher education and the nation and minority population trends into the next century. The next issue examined concerns how well the university is doing in equipping its students, faculty, and staff to understand and function in a multicultural society. References are made to several events and approaches that have addressed the racial/ethnic climate issue. These are: (1) a chancellor's conference in 1988 that addressed the role and responsibility of the university in regard to the education of minorities; (2) a 1989 teleconference on minority recruitment and retention; (3) the development of a racial/ethnic climate assessment guide by the U.S. Justice Department; and (4) a research model that is described in the recently issued Stanford Minority Issues Committee Report. Current possibilities that exist at the university for establishing its own racial/ethnic campus self-study are examined. Finally, recommendations are provided for formulating a university self-assessment. These include the need for a central organizing role for the chancellor; comprehensiveness in the assessment goals; a broad inclusion of members of the campus community as "stakeholders" in the self-study; and the use of multiple research methods. (GLR)

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SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE CAMPUS RACIAL/ETHNIC CLIMATE: A COORDINATED CAMPUS SELF-STUDY

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A number of conferences and studies, some of them including faculty/staff at this university, * have reached similar conclusions about the reasons and methods for encouraging campuses to become environments for multicultural living and education. This university has an opportunity to become one of the leaders if it follows the major recommendations contained in these sources. In particular, research/evaluation goals addressed in a systematic and comprehensive manner can produce an organized body of knowledge to serve as a sound basis on which to plan programs and make policy decisions. Major principles that need to be incorporated in production of such a knowledge base, derived from the sources mentioned above and from the best social policy and community psychology research, include (1) the central organizing role of the chancellor, (2) comprehensiveness of the assessment goals, (3) broad inclusion of members of the campus community, and (4) multiple research methods. Implementation requires, as a first step, the appointment by the chancellor of a research coordination committee, that will work out the specific details of the assessment plan.

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I. Higher Education in a Multicultural Society

A. Defining the Problem

In higher education in general and on this campus in particular, current goals include finding ways to retain minority students, faculty, and staff; avoid racially-charged campus violence; and promote diversity. The often-repeated theme surrounding these issues in higher education circles is "How shall the majority culture educate minorities?" However, the question goes beyond achievement of numerical diversity to establishment of a university environment in which across ethnic/racial groups, commonalities are stressed, diversity valued, and multiple contributions celebrated. The real question is "How shall everyone be educated to create a true and workable multicultural society?"

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*This proposal was created for a particular university and would need to be tailored appropriately for presentation at another one.

1. Focus on the university environment. When the basic question focuses on a concern with minority student recruitment and retention, an underlying assumption is often that there is something "wrong" with minority students that keeps them from graduating. This leads to the conclusion that we could remedy the problem by either recruiting different students or remolding our students to fit the environment once they are here. Similar attitudes are often held concerning recruitment and retention of minority faculty and staff. However, more and more, the figures are indicating that it is not so much factors within minority individuals as factors in the university environment that prevent minorities from succeeding at higher rates. Thus, recently it has begun to be considered that the basic university environment itself may need to be changed to accommodate a diverse population.

The social environment in which minorities must live and function at the university is an environment designed by and peopled largely by the white majority. As such, the university environment is often inhospitable to minority needs and concerns. Minority faculty and staff experience a lack of comfort and security in this environment that keeps them from operating at full capacity. In addition, majority students, faculty and staff often experience frustration arising from their inability to understand minority concerns and/or to interact with minority persons comfortably. Actually, everyone in the university community stands to benefit from movement toward a positive multicultural environment. This means a cooperative, rather than an adversarial, approach is warranted.

2. Becoming a multicultural society. Majority students, faculty, and staff need the knowledge and background to allow them to function in our increasingly diverse society and to feel comfortable functioning in a multicultural world in which they are, in fact, the minority. One-third of the nation's school children in the year 2000 will be minorities. The state of California, frequently a precursor of trends in other parts of the country, already has over 50% of its public school population identified as "minorities" and by the year 2000 no single ethnic group will be a majority of that state's population.

Currently, the population of our state is about 25% minority. Our state will be 33% minorities in 2010, 37% minority in 2025. The white majority will have dropped from 76% in 1985 to 63% in 2025. Of the 15-19 year-old age group from which college students are recruited, 25% were minorities in our state, according to the 1980 census, 33% are expected to be minorities in 1990, and 43% in 2025. In Spring, 1989, this university drew 47% of its student body from six counties. By 1990, the 15-19 year-old population of those six counties is projected to be 55% white, 45%

nonwhite. By 2025, those percentages will be reversed: 44% white, 56% nonwhite. One county provided 29% of our students in Spring, 1989. In 1980, that county's 15-19 year-old population was 25% nonwhite. Nonwhites will constitute 56% of that county's 15-19 year-olds in 1990, 70% in 2025. The trend is very clear that the country in which today's college students will work, and perhaps raise families, will be significantly more multicultural than the country of their parents.

Problems in cross-cultural understanding and communication have surfaced on campuses across the country recently in the form of various "racial" incidents. In most cases, administrators, students and faculty have expressed surprise and dismay at the depth and breadth of the racial tensions that have been revealed in previously thought calm and rational places. While some incidents have undoubtedly been intended as hostile, many others have been the result of the perpetrators' ignorance that their actions were going to be hurtful. Among the many implications of the increasing ethnic pluralism of our nation, are the fact that tomorrow's managers will not be able to manage a multicultural workforce nor will teachers be able to teach without accurate understanding of American ethnic minorities.

II. Leadership possibilities for the University.

How good a job is this university doing in equipping its students, faculty, and staff to understand and function in a multicultural society? In general, in order to become one of the leaders in moving toward a positive multicultural environment, it is important for this university to develop a shared, informed view of what the current environment is like. Thus, an information base needs to be established on this campus on the concerns, as well as the strengths of various campus constituencies--in other words, a study of the campus racial/ethnic climate.

A. Previous Approaches to Racial/Ethnic Climate Issues

Recently, on this campus and elsewhere, conferences or research reports have modeled and/or discussed movement toward a multicultural campus environment through centrally-coordinated, multi-faceted, campus-wide efforts.

1. Chancellor's Conference. In April, 1988, the Chancellor's Conference addressed the role and responsibility of the university for the education of minorities. In addition to the various recommendations for programs and policies, the summary and group reports mentioned a number of needs for supporting assessment, research, or formal evaluation.

Included among the many assessment needs mentioned were

(1) needs and feelings of minority students about the university; (2) impact of the faculty on students, inside and outside of the classroom; (3) need to examine the institutional culture and structure in regard to understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity by faculty, staff, and students; (4) "climate" checks on departments by an outside person; (5) clearly defined and evaluated departmental objectives; (6) student input on the things proposed in the conference; (7) a review of course and curricular offerings to determine inclusion of cultural diversity where that is appropriate; and (8) extent of faculty awareness of resources and programs for minority students. Other research or evaluation needs were also mentioned or implied.

While the conference proceedings do not speak specifically to the question of how to address the evaluation/research needs, several principles for how to approach the general problem were suggested. Among these are the crucial need for faculty involvement, the combination of both central and unit-based responsibility, separate and integrated initiatives, and a central organizing committee appointed by the Chancellor to ensure comprehensive and coordinated activities.

2. Teleconference. In October, 1989 a teleconference on Minority Recruitment and Retention was attended by a number of faculty and administrative staff on this campus. Chief administrators from several colleges, including the University of Wisconsin at Madison and the University of Georgia system, discussed ways they were working on multiple fronts toward achievement of a better racial climate and a more multicultural environment on their respective campuses. The major themes were similar to themes that emerged from the Chancellor's Conference. It was emphasized that the problem is not merely one of minority recruitment and retention but a problem involving the campus environment and the university's educational role in society. Thus, both the problem and its solutions are wide-ranging and comprehensive.

3. Assessment Guide. A conciliation specialist in the Community Relations Department of the U.S. Justice Department in Philadelphia, Judith Kruger, has written a guide to racial/ethnic climate assessment for university campuses. The guide, based on experience dealing with racial tension and racial incidents on a number of college campuses in the last few years, emphasizes the wide-ranging nature of the problem and the need for a comprehensive, all-campus approach to the solution with direction and coordination from the campus's chief administrative officer.

4. Stanford Minority Issues Committee Report. A research model, that incorporates many of the principles

mentioned in the Chancellor's Conference report, the teleconference on Minority Recruitment and Retention, and the Justice Department Assessment Guide, exists in the recently-completed Stanford Minority Issues Committee Report. The study was organized by a special campus-wide, representative committee appointed for that purpose by the President and Provost. Included in the study were investigations of (1) the undergraduate curriculum; (2) minority faculty recruitment, hiring, and promotion; (3) undergraduate and graduate student recruitment, admissions, financial aid, and retention; (4) student life; and (5) staff recruitment, hiring, promotion, and development. Multiple perspectives and multiple research methods were used. Interviews, discussions, and surveys of students, faculty, and staff, as well as compilation of university records, were involved.

B. Current Possibilities

A number of people on this campus have expressed interest in these issues, have urged studies on some piece of the "problem," or are currently involved in some information-gathering effort. As noted above, the Chancellor's Allerton Conference reports make a number of recommendations that include either a direct call or an implied need for research or systematic evaluation in a number of areas.

It is becoming more clear as efforts are beginning to be made to follow some of the Allerton conference recommendations, that there is a need for a central coordinating effort. Particularly, if research/evaluation goals were to be addressed in a systematic and comprehensive manner, results of commissioned, as well as already completed or ongoing campus studies, could be combined to provide an organized body of knowledge. Redundancy and gaps in knowledge could be reduced or eliminated in order to create a sound information base on which to plan programs and make policy decisions. The Stanford study--a coordinated, comprehensive university self-study--would be a good model for assessment at this campus. Choosing this study as a model does not mean this campus would necessarily do all the same things, but it does mean its guiding principles would be incorporated.

In the October 1989 teleconference on minority recruitment, the president of the University of Georgia, noted that the argument is often made that the university is only a reflection of society. He took issue with this argument, saying that, on the contrary, it is the university's job to help lead society. If the university's role is to be at the forefront, one way to work at that role is to initiate and follow through on a variety of efforts to dispel cross-cultural ignorance, such as research, programs, services, and policy review and revision.

On the surface the racial/ethnic climate on this campus has until recently appeared calm and there are currently a number of positive efforts being made to foster cross-cultural communication and interaction. Because the atmosphere is not one of crisis, this is an optimum time to gather and discuss such information. First of all, it must be noted that relative quiet does not mean there are no problems. Secondly, the university has an opportunity to be proactive, rather than reacting "under the gun" so to speak.

III. Recommendations for a University Self-Assessment

A. Guiding Principles

A few major principles were mentioned in all the sources discussed above. It is strongly recommended that these principles be incorporated in the process of doing any assessment.

1. Chancellor's role. First, it is crucial to the success of the effort that the Chancellor say clearly and openly that he wants an assessment done, that he's behind it, that it is a whole campus effort, that he will pay attention to the results, and intends to implement any recommendations. For one thing, his open support signals to all participants that it is worth their serious attention, and to minority participants, particularly, that it is worth their while to risk being forthright. A top-down, central initiative is essential, in addition to encouragement of multiple, individual "bottom-up" initiatives.

2. Campus community comprehensiveness. Second, the assessment goals need to be broad and comprehensive in covering the campus community. The university environment consists of various groups -students, faculty, academic staff, nonacademic staff - made up of people with varying ethnic or racial backgrounds. Each group of people has a set of concerns regarding how to operate in a culturally diverse environment, as a white teacher to black students, as a Dean to International students, as a white student to Asian-American students, as a Latino secretary to a white policeman, etc. The university is an interdependent community, such that it makes sense to study the university community as a whole, as opposed to looking at one or two aspects. It does not makes sense, for example, to just study housing or to just study students or to focus on only one or two academic departments. Students are affected by faculty as well as by housing. Faculty are affected by students and by their staff. What one department does often affects what can happen in another department and all together constitute the university's atmosphere. How nonacademic employees are treated is evidence of the campus' attitude. Overall, majority and minority faculty, students, and staff derive their attitudes from the campus milieu as a whole and behave

according to perceived campus norms. Existing assessment initiatives can be encouraged and others instituted in such a way that the whole campus is covered.

3. Inclusion of "stakeholders". Third, the process of developing, interpreting, and implementing the goals and the various aspects of the self-study needs to be representative of the university population. Generation of goals and content should include face-to-face communication in discussion groups and/or interviews and findings should be discussed with relevant groups, departments or individuals before any final reports or recommendations are completed. This representation is needed to ensure the validity of the content of the study, the usefulness of the information to the decision-makers, and the stake that different groups have in the success of both the information-gathering stage and the implementation stage of the study. It is hoped that the process itself will generate helpful inter- and intra-group communication, and that by the time report(s) come back to the Chancellor's office, each will have already generated discussion, concern, change, and a broad base of support.

4. Multiple research methods. As indicated in the preceding paragraphs, research/assessment can be thought of in a much broader context than a mailed survey. Multiple research approaches are called for, including not only mailed surveys, but also interviews, group discussion techniques, collation of existing records, etc.

The overriding principle is to regard the campus as an interdependent community and to apply the best that is known from social policy and community psychology research experience to moving this university toward a multicultural environment. The process of assessment is as important as the research outcomes; and a crucial part of the goal is generating awareness, investment, motivation, and knowledge on the part of the community residents - the faculty, administrators, students, staff.

B. Steps toward Implementation

1. Appointment of a coordinating committee. Specific details of the overall assessment process need to be developed by a research coordination committee, representative of the university community, appointed by the Chancellor. Keeping in mind that this is a university self-study, that committee then can set an agenda with such input as it deems appropriate and decide on its own working format and procedures. A general charge should be given to the committee by the Chancellor with the proviso that it may be amended in discussion with the committee after it sets its agenda, if appropriate. Interim and final reporting dates should be set. This broad-based committee will be equipped to deal with such matters as developing a support base and a

common statement of goals, gathering resources, coordinating planned research with already existing research initiatives by individuals and departments, encouraging or instigating needed research, and compilation and dissemination of relevant findings.

The committee will choose, from among the issues it discovers in its meeting process, the matters that seem reasonable to address. Some measures already exist for some topic areas, and the committee will have to decide the relative merits of using pre-existing measures vs. the value of the process of developing its own. A balance needs to be achieved in which the study is broad enough to adequately understand how the university racial/ethnic climate supports and hinders the achievement of a comfortably diverse campus, but not so broad that it will get bogged down and nothing useful will come of it.

2. Research issues. Ultimately, the content of the study will be decided by the committee, informed by preliminary interviews and other information-gathering efforts. However, some suggestions for the focus and content of the study are as follows.

An appropriate focus for the study would be descriptions and comparisons of the experience of minority and majority students, faculty and staff in social and academic areas of their lives as part of this campus and this community, particularly as relevant to cross-cultural interactions and understanding. Also, of interest are student, faculty, and staff knowledge of and openness toward other racial/ethnic groups, and the extent to which social diversity is valued in general.

Issues that have arisen on other campuses include, but are not limited to, the following:

Curriculum - assessment of majors, concentrations, or courses in ethnic studies; inclusion of material related to ethnicity in other courses; "demand" for such information on the part of majority and minority students, interest of faculty in teaching such material and appropriate conditions or incentives to do so.

Classroom - assessment of treatment of minority students, e.g., helpful and unhelpful minority student experiences in the classroom, academic performance expectations, expectations related to being the "expert" on matters pertaining to their ethnic group; handling of issues related to ethnicity in the classroom, when raised by either the teacher or the students; faculty understanding of minority student strengths and problems, including difficulty in dealing with being the obvious only member of one's ethnic group in a class and faculty understanding of how to be

helpful and not unhelpful in their interactions with minority students.

Outside the formal classroom - How are students getting along in labs? Work situations?

Academic advising, mentoring, outside of class interaction - research has shown that mentors of their own ethnic group are extremely important to the success of minority students-What experience have minority students had with mentoring and advising here? How does the mentoring/advising load of minority faculty/staff here compare to that of white faculty/staff and how does it impact on progress toward tenure, etc?

Faculty/Academic Staff - How well is the university doing in its recruitment and retention of minority persons? Do different departments use strategies and policies that are differentially effective, such that more successful strategies might be identified and used by other departments? How are minority and majority ethnic group faculty members getting along with each other? What departmental practices and conditions have been helpful and unhelpful in regard to interpersonal comfort and scholarly progress? Are there community conditions that impact positively or negatively on minority faculty/staff life here that the university might address?

Graduate students - graduate students teach many classes today and are tomorrow's faculty-How are departments faring in their recruitment and retention of minority graduate students? Is there information to be shared on what works well?

Student Social Life - What has been helpful or unhelpful for minority students in the residential environment? What are the experiences and attitudes of majority and minority students toward each other? To what extent do students misunderstand, mistrust, resent students of ethnic groups other than their own? To what extent do students value ethnic diversity and wish to have it work better? What is the importance of having a "critical mass" of students of one's own ethnic group? How do students regard the diversity of cultural life on and around campus?

Nonacademic staff - How do minority staff feel about hiring, pay and promotion for minorities on this campus? Do majority staff harbor misunderstandings or resentments toward minority staff and hiring policies? To what extent are working relationships, including supervision, positive or negative? To what extent is the university's treatment of minority nonacademic staff related to student perceptions of how they should behave toward minority persons?

University policies - Are there university policies that might be changed or strengthened to improve the campus environment in regard to ethnic issues, e.g., police treatment of minority students, police reporting of incidents of racial harassment in a special category?